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CENTRAL FAX CENTER****JUL 31 2006****Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph 0042 with the following rewritten version:

[0042] The nonmagnetic intermediate layer 3 in the magnetic recording medium of the present invention must be made of an alloy (or metal) that has an hcp crystal structure and is preferentially oriented in the hcp (100) plane or the hcp (200) plane. Specifically, the nonmagnetic intermediate layer 3 is preferably made of (1) an alloy containing at least Ge and containing at least one selected from the group consisting of Fe and Mn, (2) an alloy containing at least Co and containing at least one selected from the group consisting of W and Mo, (3) an alloy containing at least Ti and containing at least one selected from the group consisting of Pd, Ga and Al, (4) an alloy containing at least Ni and containing at least one selected from the group consisting of Zr, Sn and In, (5) an alloy of Fe and Sn, (6) at least one compound selected from the group consisting of carbides and nitrides of Co, Ni and Fe, or (7) an alloy having an Ni<sub>3</sub>Sn-type (~~DO49-type~~) (DO19-type) or AuCd-type (B19-type) regular lattice structure.